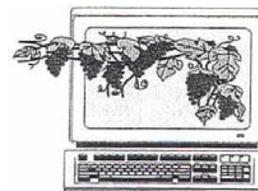


# COMPUTER NEWS



Volume 24, No. 2

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*The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, online forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. Through its Computers-to-Schools program, members refurbish used computer equipment for donation to local schools. Since January 2003 the NVPCUG has donated 577 computers and 136 printers. Additional equipment has been given to charitable nonprofit organizations and disadvantaged individuals.*

## New Products and Software to Be Demonstrated at February 21 Meeting

**The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users group will meet Wednesday, February 21, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California.**

In the main presentation **David B. Whittle** will demonstrate or introduce products of general appeal to computer users. "Whittle's Picks" are hidden gems from companies large and small, old and new, with outstanding, innovative offerings — including Muvee™ Technologies ([www.muvee.com](http://www.muvee.com)), Lenovo (formerly IBM) Thinkpad ([www.thinkpad.com](http://www.thinkpad.com)), Zip\*Linq ([www.ziplinq.com](http://www.ziplinq.com)), and the *Invisus PC Security Solution* ([myinvisusdirect.com/user-groups](http://myinvisusdirect.com/user-groups)). Whittle is the author of *Cyberspace: The Human Dimension* and was named by *Working Woman Magazine* as "one of America's most original technological thinkers." He writes for *Smart Computing*. Dave will introduce some of his favorite technologies, products, and services that help resolve problems for computer users and others. He will provide time for questions and will bring valuable door prizes, informative handouts, and actual products for sale at significantly discounted prices arranged exclusively for user groups.



David Whittle

Preceding the main presentation, **Jerry Brown** will lead the Random Access portion of the meeting with an open-floor question-and-answer period, during which attendees can ask questions about computers and computer-related problems and receive helpful information from other meeting attendees. (Don't forget that you can also e-mail your questions to Jerry Brown before coming to the meeting: [Questions@nvpcug.org](mailto:Questions@nvpcug.org)).

Following this, there will be a Computer Tutor session at which **Jeff Solomon**, Computer Tutor coordinator, will discuss online encyclopedias like *Encarta*, *Wikipedia*, and the *Britannica* and how to get the most out of them.

**Could you use some practical information that would help you make better use of your computer? Come to this meeting! Guests are welcome; admission is free.**

# President's Message

OK, it's February and things are moving pretty fast. Back in May of 2002 we received our IRS Advanced Ruling granting us temporary 501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt status. Well, that ruling expired on December 31, 2006. We have ninety days from that date to submit the documentation necessary to get a final ruling on our tax status.

**Roy Wagner**, as our Treasurer and CFO, is taking on the brunt of the work. **Marcia Waddell**, as our Secretary and official keeper of the records, will also carry part of that responsibility. Yours truly has and will do my share as well. First I want to thank both Roy and Marcia for taking on this formidable task.

Upon contacting the IRS we were surprised to find that we not only have to report our "membership dues" but any and all donations, contributions, sales, raffles, drawings, collections, or any items we have received from any source since May 24, 2002 and the remainder of the last five (5) years. That includes donations of computer equipment to our CTS program. Whether the group actually gained by receiving any of these is not pertinent to the issue. Coming up with fair market value for the many donated items will be interesting. Oh, didn't I mention that we have to do that also? The IRS is looking at our "funding." They will take the total of all our "income" and determine if at least over 33 1/3 percent of the total proceeds were received from the general public. That will determine our status. The next few months will certainly be interesting. If you can help Roy or Marcia in this endeavor please let them know. You can reach Roy at [Treasurer@nvpcug.org](mailto:Treasurer@nvpcug.org) and Marcia at [Secretary@nvpcug.org](mailto:Secretary@nvpcug.org).

There are many advantages to keeping our tax-exempt status, including receiving donations, grants, and contributions; being able to purchase insurance; renting use of the **Napa Senior Activity Center**; holding raffles and drawings; not being required to collect sales taxes; and many others.

I made a slipstreamed bootable CD of *WinXP-SP2* with updates the other day, and it took some work and time. I can make a disk with the information and programs necessary to make your own CD, and the group can sell them for whatever the board feels is a reasonable amount. You would only need your *WinXP* CD, a CD-R/W drive, a blank CD-R, and this CD to slipstream your own. What you get from this is a way of installing *XP* with the Service Packs and updates already included, so you don't have to install *XP*, then install *SP2*, then log on to the Internet and start downloading and installing all the updates. Interested? Let me know at [President@nvpcug.org](mailto:President@nvpcug.org).



Got any ideas to improve the group, programs, presentations, meetings, or SIGs? Let me know. I hope to see each of you at our February 21 meeting. Ron.

## NVPCUG Special Interest Groups

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, [www.nvpcug.org](http://www.nvpcug.org), or contact the SIG leaders.

### Digital Photography SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Wednesday  
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.  
Piner's Nursing Home,  
Conference Room  
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa  
Leader: **Susy Ball**  
(707) 337-3998  
[SusyBall@aol.com](mailto:SusyBall@aol.com)

### Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday  
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
Jerry Brown's home,  
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa  
Leader: **Jerry Brown**  
(707) 254-9607  
[bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net)

### Macintosh SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday  
6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Napa Senior Activity Center  
1500 Jefferson St., Napa  
Leader: **Jim Gillespie**  
(707) 252-1665  
[napanerd@pacbell.net](mailto:napanerd@pacbell.net)

## NVPCUG Calendar

Wednesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
February 21	6:30-9:00 p.m.
March 7	7:00-9:00 p.m.
March 8	6:30-8:30 p.m.
March 12	5:30-7:30 p.m.
March 14	7:00-8:30 p.m.

Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer, contact Orion Hill, (707) 252-0637.  
NVPCUG General Meeting, Napa  
Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa  
Macintosh SIG meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa  
Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa  
Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa

## Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

### Officers for 2006

#### Board of Directors

President	Ron Dack		President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	Jerry Brown	254-9607	VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org

**Other Directors:** Susy Ball, Jim Gillespie, Bernhard Krevet, Ken Manfree, Dick Peterson, Dianne Prior, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Jeff Solomon, James Stirling, Dean Unruh

#### Appointed Officers

Computer Recycling Coordinator	Ken Manfree	224-3901	Recycler@nvpcug.org
Computer Tutor Coordinator	Jeff Solomon		Tutor@nvpcug.org
Computers-to-Schools Program Coordinator	Orion E. Hill	252-0637	CTS@nvpcug.org
Facility Arrangements Coordinator	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Facility@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Greeter@nvpcug.org
Librarian	Dean Unruh	226-9164	Librarian@nvpcug.org
Membership Director	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Membership@nvpcug.org
Mentor Program Coordinator	Dick Peterson	259-1712	Mentors@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Circulator	Jim Hearn	224-2540	Circulation@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Editor	James Stirling	944-1177	Editor@nvpcug.org
Product Review Coord.	Susy Ball	337-3998	Reviews@nvpcug.org
Product Review Coord.	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Reviews2@nvpcug.org
Programs Director	Susy Ball	337-3998	Programs@nvpcug.org
Publicity Director	Ron Dack		Publicity@nvpcug.org
Random Access Moderator	Jerry Brown	254-9607	Questions@nvpcug.org
Special Projects Director	Jeff Solomon		Projects@nvpcug.org
Webmaster	Ron Dack		Webmaster@nvpcug.org

\*All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

## Come to the NVPCUG General Meetings

**Held the third Wednesday  
of each month**

**7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

**Napa Senior Activities  
Center**

**1500 Jefferson Street,  
Napa**

#### NVPCUG *Computer News*

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The NVPCUG is an IRC 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit educational organization (EIN 68-0069663) and is a member of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization. Donations to the NVPCUG are tax-deductible as charitable contributions to the extent allowed by law. Copyright © 2007 by NVPCUG.

## Winmail.dat Attachments

By Susy Ball, NVPCUG Programs Director



Since I am one of those nonconformists who don't use *Outlook* or *Outlook Express* and instead use AOL, I am forever getting those pesky *winmail.dat* attachments that I can't open. But a short time ago I found a way to do so, using [kopf.com.br/winmail](http://kopf.com.br/winmail). I learned about this when I began receiving e-mail from a friend in Fresno who had not been used to sending *winmail.dat* attachments. This program does not read other *.dat* files on your computer, nor does it read all *winmail.dat* files, but it is worth a try. And it is better to try than to say you didn't get the attachment when you really did. Sometimes the attachment reveals something like a *.doc* or maybe even a *PDF*.

I was very excited about this find. I think it might be worth a try for those who do not use *Outlook* or *Outlook Express*.

Go to <http://www.kopf.com.br/winmail/> for your free download.

## Product Review Requests

Please remember that all requests for review products should go through the reviews coordinators. Many vendors do not like or even accept unofficial requests for their software. Anyone who makes a request for a review product will be expected to write a review in a timely fashion for our newsletter.

A couple of times we have supplied members of our group with review products who have not come through with a writeup. Vendors tend to keep track of products they have sent out, and when they see no evidence of such a review they sometimes respond by blacklisting the group until a review is forthcoming, or by flat-out denying any further requests.

At this time the Co-review coordinators are Susy Ball and Marcia Waddell, and they have products to be reviewed. Their e-mails are [susyball@aol.com](mailto:susyball@aol.com) and [marcia451@comcast.net](mailto:marcia451@comcast.net), or you can reach them at [Reviews@nvpcug.org](mailto:Reviews@nvpcug.org) or [Reviews2@nvpcug.org](mailto:Reviews2@nvpcug.org).

Now, we by no means want to discourage members from reviewing new products; actually quite the opposite. We want only to facilitate your requests for products to try out for the edification of the rest of us. And remember, as a result of writing a review, the product is yours to do with as you see fit. (which means that you may honestly keep it or give it away.)

## Raffle Prize for February

Lexmark All-in-One Printer with PictBridge (X2480)

- Print, scan and copy
- PictBridge enabled
- Print up to 17 ppm
- Up to 4800 x 1200 dpi
- One-touch copying
- USB compatible



**Inkjet:** The Lexmark X2480 all-in-one printer uses inkjet technology to create great-looking documents and photos for the home or office.

**Printer speed:** Print fast—up to 17 ppm for color text.

**Color copying:** Make up to 99 copies at a time easily with the one-touch button. You can also reduce or enlarge documents from 25% to 400%.

**Flatbed scanner:** The flatbed scanner easily handles thick books, reports, and more with up to 600 x 1200 ppi optical resolution.

**Connection options:** This printer is USB and PictBridge compatible.

**System requirements:**

Windows 98, Me, 2000, XP

Tickets are available at the General Meeting  
for \$1<sup>00</sup> each or 6 for \$5<sup>00</sup>  
Must be present to WIN

# The Electronic Waste Act

By Ken Manfree, NVPCUG Computer Recycling Coordinator

On September 29, 2004 the California State Senate passed an Electronic Waste Act (SB20 and SB50). The act required each retailer, starting January 1, 2005, to collect a fee for electronic equipment with video display devices when it is sold to a California resident. The fee is being used to reimburse companies and organizations for costs that are incurred in the recycle process.

## Fee amounts

Viewable screen size, measured diagonally	Fee
More than four inches but less than 15 inches.....	\$ 6.00
At least 15 inches but less than 35 inches .....	\$ 8.00
35 inches or more .....	\$10.00

Multiple agencies and laws govern the disposal of e-waste in California. Primarily the governing regulations of disposing of e-waste come under the Health and Safety Code. The controlling agencies are the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) and the Department of Toxic Substance Control. (DTSC) The State Board of Equalization administers the moneys.

There are two categories used in the disposal of e-waste, one is a "Collector" and the other is a "Recycler." A Collector is a person who collects and ships e-waste. A Recycler is a person who processes e-waste; this may include the reclaiming of precious metals or devices. A Recycler also can mean someone who refurbishes devices for reuse. A person or an organization that handles 5 or more electronic devices comes under the jurisdiction of the Integrated Waste Management Board.

Locally, Napa Recycling and Waste Services, Goodwill Stores and Salvation Army Stores are among the many organizations that have qualified under SB20/ SB50 to be a certified E-waste Collector. Recyclers of Fresno and The Computer Recycling Center of Santa Rosa are qualified as Recyclers. There are presently 49 companies that are certified as recyclers in California.

SB 20/SB 50 provides \$0.28 for each pound of qualified recycle material. This money is the force that is driving fund-raising by nonprofit organizations. Qualified Collectors and Recyclers are actively recruiting nonprofit organizations to host e-waste recycle events. The first fund-raiser event was by The Goodwill Industries of San Diego and a local Cub Scout Pack. The event was successful and paved the way for many in the recycling industry to formulate similar programs. The SB20/SB50 has set into motion the expansion of the E-waste industry. Universal Waste Management is a company formed in 2005 to participate in e-waste recycling .UWM has been certified as an E-waste Collector. The company has taken an aggressive position in the recruitment of local nonprofits to use the moneys from e-waste as a fund-raiser.

Nonprofits provide three valuable assets. First, the

nonprofit provides a community face for the recycling. Next is a location where e-waste can be collected. Additionally, the law requires record keeping; ensuring that all the products being recycled are from California. These three requirements make teaming up, between a nonprofit and a certified Collector, a practical solution for recycling.

The City of Napa has spent city funds for recycling. Previous years the cost of the June Recycling event, according to City of Napa Recycling, has been up to \$120,000 per year. Future events, with the funds generated by SB20/SB50, may be self-supporting or profitable to the City of Napa. The July 2006 issue of the Napa County AT&T Telephone Book has a large section on Recycling. It is a handy reference for everyone. The City of Napa owns the land at 820 Levitin Way. Napa Recycling and Waste Services are using the land by a contract with the city and county. Any resident of the State of California can drop off e-waste material at the facility at no cost. So if you have a TV or computer that is useless and you want to dispose of it, take it to the Napa Recycle and Waste Services location.

SB20/SB50 has changed the landscape for e-waste recycling. Prior to the law most recycling was mandated by punishment for people who illegally disposed of waste and hazardous materials. Now the landscape has various organizations vying to recycle e-waste. Since SB20/SB50 has paved the way for financial benefit of video display devices, we can expect future laws to have similar surcharges for other hazardous waste.

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## How to Get *Linspire* for Free

Linspire is providing APCUG member groups with a free downloadable copy of *Linspire 5.0 Version 2.0* (\$49.95 value) in ISO format. *Linspire 5.0* can be downloaded until March 1st. Use this link to download the program: [www.linspire.com/apcug](http://www.linspire.com/apcug)

No coupon code is needed. After going to the Web page, click the checkout button. If you do not already have a *Linspire* account, you will need to create one. Click the continue buttons until you get to the download directions page. NOTE: *Linspire* is provided in ISO boot image format. You will need to use your CD-ROM burning software to burn the image to a CD-ROM that can then be booted. *Linspire* provides directions on its download page.

Judy Tylour, Chair of the Benefits and Services Committee of the APCUG, says, "You are receiving these discount offers as a benefit of your user group's membership in APCUG. APCUG does not endorse any company offering discounts, but makes these offers available as a service to its members."

*Editor's Note: Until you get the free Linspire account, you will get nowhere in this process. When they send you assurance that you are a registered user, you can make progress in the download process. They caution that you really ought to have DSL or similar bandwidth speed. To take advantage of the process here, give yourself a little time; it is not a simple one-click download. But I think you will find the effort worthwhile. JS*

# Should You Upgrade to Vista?

Written by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida <http://www.spcug.org>

As regular readers of this column know, I have been using the beta version(s) of *Vista* and writing about my experience. I'll grant you that I haven't covered every aspect of the *Vista* experience. However, it is difficult to touch on everything in an operating system as massive as this. The best I can do is pass on comments on the parts I use frequently. As to the answer to the upgrade question – it's "maybe." I'll give you some of the pros and cons related to my experience.

In deciding whether or not to upgrade you need to determine if your hardware is adequate to run *Vista*. The system I am using has 768 MB of RDRAM, a 1.2 GHz Intel processor, an NVIDIA GeForce 2 MMX video card and an 80 GB hard drive. Frankly, I don't think you would want anything less. A faster processor combined with 1 GB of RAM would be the minimum in most situations. You will also need a DVD drive, as *Vista* will be sold on DVDs only. From what I have learned it appears that Microsoft will produce only one DVD, but it will contain all the consumer versions of *Vista*. When you pay for the *Vista Basic* version and start the installation, the product key that you have to enter tells the setup program which version to install. Then if you decide you need to upgrade to a version with more bells and whistles, you get a new product key that unlocks and installs the upgrade version you paid for. I've already seen some comments on the Web that the hackers will be paying for *Vista Basic* and then will hack the DVD to install the Ultimate version. Let's hope not!

So if you have sufficient hardware then you can go to the next step. What is there about *Vista* that's better than *XP*? (Note that if you are still running *Win98* or *WinMe*, plan on upgrading. Both *Vista* and *XP* are vastly superior to either of these older, nonsupported operating systems.) One thing I found that I really like is *Vista's* ability to go to the Internet to find device drivers for hardware. It did this very successfully for my sound system. I also installed an external hard drive that usually requires me to dig out the manufacturer's disk to get the necessary drivers. *XP* frequently forgot the driver and would have to reinstall it whenever I plugged the drive into the USB port. When I plugged the drive into a USB port on my *Vista* computer, there wasn't even the usual found new hardware notice. So I went looking and in "Computer" I found the hard drive identified and was able to access the file on it. So I just went ahead and did a complete backup. *Vista's* backup software found the drive and did the complete backup in the background while I continued working. This process did not work with my Epson scanner. *Vista* did some searching and then said I needed to visit the manufacturer's Web site to see if software was available. So you

can see that this Internet process doesn't work with all hardware.

Another thing I like in *Vista* is the added security. I don't like that the firewall is only a one-way blocker, but the scheduled daily parasite check is valuable when you have a cable or DSL connection to the Internet. I don't find the User Account Control (UAC) system to be intrusive, as some others have reported. Even when I am working in the Administrator account it is not a problem. I think having to enter a password to carry out operations that affect the system/registry is a good idea. It is one more barrier for any malware to overcome. In addition, when I am working in User mode and want to install a new application, I don't have to remember to right-click the install file and select "Run As." Instead, when I double-click the file I get a permissions window with the Administrator name and a box to enter the password. It's a much easier and quicker way to get on with the installation.

I also like the change that has been made in the Start/All programs menu. It keeps you from having to search through multiple columns of programs to find the one you want. Scrolling through a single column list is something I find easier to do. For new computer users, the use of an icon in place of a "Start" button may not be intuitive. However, placing your cursor on the icon does cause the word "Start" to pop up just above the icon. One of the interesting little facets is the speed with which informative small windows pop up when you place your cursor on an icon. There is really no apparent delay, which is quite helpful.

Another change I like is that there is a search box in every directory window. You don't have to go back to the Start menu to initiate a search. Also, your searches can easily be saved. You have the options in each window to select files to burn to a CD/DVD, e-mail, or print. These selections are made using a menu across the top of the window.

When it comes to CD/DVD burning, there is one aspect I don't like. That is that the default mode calls for formatting the CD or DVD so that it functions like a removable drive. Microsoft refers to this as the "Live File System". The problem with this is that the CD/DVD may not be readable in other computers. Their warning implies that the "Live File System" can be read in computers using the *Windows XP* operating system. However, I found this to be inaccurate, at least as far as the beta versions were concerned. It may be different in the final release version.

You can change the formatting method to "Mastered." This is the usual way you burn a CD/DVD by copying all the files for that disk at one time. CD/DVDs formatted for the "Live File System" can have files added by "dragging

and dropping”. You can also add and erase files. However, on a non-rewriteable disk the file is still there even though it is not accessible. Frankly, there are other burner software programs that I prefer. The third-party programs also work much faster than the *Vista* application.

In *Windows XP* when you have a file folder open you can move or copy a file that has been selected. When you click on the move or copy icon on the right side of the window you get a browse window which allows you to select a destination either on your local computer or a computer on your network. *Vista* does not have this function. To move a file or files, you must first select them to be copied. Then you have to go to the destination window and select paste from the right-click menu with your mouse. Then it's back to the original window to delete the files you have copied to the new location. If that sounds like a roundabout procedure, well it is. The *XP* procedure is cleaner, faster and easier.

Networking is another area where there have been some improvements made. However, if you have a network with both *XP* and *Vista* computers, there are still some bugs that have to be worked around. The Windows Help files have eliminated the references related to networking with *XP* computers. There are no references to the fact that the new Internet protocol, IPv6, needs to be installed on *XP* computers for them to be networked with *Vista* computers. I couldn't even find the Web page reference in the Help file that give me the details on installing IPv6 on *XP* computers. Again, this may be changed in the final version, or the current build I'm using may not need to have IPv6 installed on the *XP* computers.

The biggest drawback I see to *Vista* is the pricing. The \$99.95 upgrade for the Home version is the same as with *XP Home*. Except, this lowest-cost upgrade gives you only *Vista Home Basic*. This version has fewer capabilities than does *XP Home*. The version of *Vista* that comes closest to matching *XP Home* is *Vista Home Premium*, and it carries a premium price; \$150 to upgrade. *Vista Home Basic* lacks the Windows Media Center, DVD video software, and wireless networking provisioning. This latter capability, if available, would provide automatic configuration of laptops in WiFi hot-spots. *Vista Home Basic* does not allow for scheduled backups and does not include backup to a network device. Neither Basic nor Premium allow for image-based backups. They also do not support motherboards with two processor sockets. How this will play out with the Intel Core 2 Duo processors, I really don't know. *Vista Home Basic* also does not have the new Aero graphic interface. That is found only in the Home Premium, Business and Ultimate versions. Unfortunately, I can't tell you about the Aero interface as my computer doesn't support it.

*Vista Business* is the next higher-priced version. It is \$199.99 for the upgrade. Although it has the image-based backup capability and wireless networking provisioning, it lacks Media Center capability as well as the Movie Maker and Video production capabilities. You would have to obtain third-party software for these functions if you have a need for them.

So if your only interest in using a computer is for e-mail, Web surfing, and word processing, then you might be satisfied with *Vista Basic*. However, you would be just as well off to stick with *XP Home* for the time being. If you are running a small business from your home you would probably be quite satisfied with *Vista Home Premium*. So who would need *Vista Business* or Ultimate? The business version might be useful in a small business with a wired or wireless LAN or where employees require laptops with wireless functions. It also has integrated Fax & Scan software. However, if you needed the Movie Maker, Media Center, or video production capability, then you would have to move up to Ultimate. That has an upgrade price of \$259.

If you are concerned about the security of *Windows XP* and the frequent security patches Microsoft has to release, then you can consider that *Vista* is more secure. That doesn't mean it will never need security patching. Quite the contrary. Any OS, especially one as complex as *Vista*, will have hackers attempting to find its weak points; and that will result in the need for security patches.

My concluding thoughts on this are that you will eventually have to move to *Vista*, unless you want to try an alternate OS such as a *Linux* version or a *Macintosh* OS. There are emulator programs for both *Linux* and *Macintosh* that permit you to run most *Windows* software. If you aren't one who always needs the "latest and greatest," then you might consider waiting until you purchase a new computer with *Vista* pre-installed. I certainly wouldn't recommend that anyone rush out and upgrade as soon as *Vista* hits the market. Wait a while, possibly until the first patches are available or further reviews of the final market version are available. There also may be some "street pricing" that will lower your cost of upgrading. *Vista* appears to be an improvement over *XP*, but for the average user it is not a "great leap forward."

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at: [bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com)

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# Stop! Think! Click!

By Lou Torraca, President, the MOAA Hawaii Chapter Computer User Group, Hawaii  
<http://www.the-tug.org> [president\(at\)the-tug.org](mailto:president(at)the-tug.org)

The world has changed. Today we can work, check bank balances, book travel, research medical questions, talk to friends and family members, order books and music, bid on auction items, and even buy a car without leaving home, thanks to the Internet. However, the Internet is not without hazards. The Internet and the anonymity it affords can give online scammers, hackers, and identity thieves access to your computer, personal information, finances and more.

With many of you shopping on the Internet, I wanted to provide an update on that Internet bugaboo: *Security!* First of all, for those of you who are concerned about using your credit cards for Internet purchases, a couple of things to consider: first, most CC companies have a \$50 maximum amount for which you are liable if someone uses your number without your permission. In fact, many have a \$0 liability policy, sometimes tied to a requirement that you report the use within a certain time frame. So, step 1 should be to check with your CC customer service and find out what the policy is. Also, it is possible with many CCs to get a one-time use number that might be a new account number, or just the 3-digit number on the reverse side of your card. Check with the CC company or the issuing bank. Obviously, you will want to check your CC account regularly to see if any bogus charges have been added. This is pretty easy if you setup an online account, and even easier if your issuing bank or CC company has an alert setup that will notify you if an unusual charge appears. Remember that all the other security measures that affect your computer, e.g. antivirus, anti-spy/malware, firewall, updating your operating system, etc. further ensure your safety. A good reference is: [www.microsoft.com/athome/security/viruses](http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/viruses).

Protect your privacy and personal information online; if you are asked for personal information such as your name, e-mail, address, telephone number, account numbers, or Social Security number, find out how the information is going to be used before you share it. Find out how the requester protects your personal information. Remember, it is your information.

Whether you are shopping, banking, or conducting other business online, do not provide your personal or financial information through a company's Web site until you have checked for indicators that the site is secure. Look for "https" in the Web address (the "s" stands for secure). Look for a padlock or an unbroken key in the lower right corner of the status bar. Double-click the padlock or key to ensure that the "issued by" name on the security certificate matches the name in the address bar.

If you get an e-mail or pop-up message asking for

personal information, do not reply or click on the link in the message. If you think there may be a need to provide information to the requester (you have an account with the company or have placed an order) contact the company directly by telephone. Do not send your personal information via e-mail; it is not a secure transmission method.

Here is an excellent place to learn about phishing:  
[www.microsoft.com/athome/security](http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security)

Anyone can set up shop online. It is a good practice to know with whom you are dealing and what you are getting into. Proceed with caution in your online activities. If you shop online, check out the seller before you buy. A legitimate business or individual seller should give you a physical address and a working telephone number you can call in case you have problems. Call the telephone number before you buy. Never send cash, personal checks or money orders for online purchases. Check out the terms of the deal, like refund policies and delivery dates. The law requires sellers to ship items as promised, or within 30 days after the order date if no specific date is promised.

Delete junk e-mail without opening the message. If you open the e-mail, it can alert the spammer that the address is good. Never reply to spam. This includes responding to an option to "Remove me from your list." Do not buy anything or give to any charity marketing through spam. Spammers may swap or sell e-mail addresses of their customers. If you make a purchase as the result of a spam e-mail, it may result in more spam. Do not forward chain e-mail messages. You lose control over who sees your e-mail address. You might also be forwarding a hoax aiding in the delivery of a virus.

Passwords are the key to unlocking your computer and online accounts. A strong password provides better security against hackers and thieves. Strong passwords should be over eight characters in length, combine letters, numbers, and symbols, and should avoid using common words. Do not use your name, your spouse's name, your birthday or location. Change your passwords regularly or at least every 90 days.

Do not use the same password for each online account you use. Keep your passwords secret. Do not give passwords out to family or friends or send your passwords over e-mail. Do not enable the "Save Password Option" if you receive a dialog box asking you if you would like the computer to remember your password. Do not store written passwords on or near your computer.

Record passwords and store in a safe, secure place. One way to create a strong and memorable password is to think of a "pass phrase." Think of a phrase that is easy to remember like "I save my pennies for a rainy day." Use

the first letter of each word as your password, converting some letters into numbers that resemble letters; for example “Ismø4ard.” Notice the combination of upper and lower case letters, numbers and symbols.

Pay attention to what kids do and whom they meet online. Consider a rule that no child reveals personal information, including photos, without permission. Warn kids never to meet Internet “friends” in person. Parental controls are provided by most Internet Service Providers, or sold as separate software. No software can substitute for parental supervision. Talk to your kids and/or grandkids about safe computing as well as things they are seeing and doing online.

Stop and think before you click; before you provide information, open files or attachments, or download files from unknown senders, take a minute to stop and think.

Free downloads can contain spyware. To avoid it, resist the urge to install any software unless you know exactly what it is. You can install anti-spyware software and then use it regularly to scan for and delete spyware. E-mail attachments and links sent over e-mail will not damage your computer without your participation. You have to open an e-mail or attachment that includes a virus or fol-

low a link to a site that is programmed to infect your computer. Do not open an e-mail attachment unless you expect it and know what it contains. You can help others trust your attachments by including a message in your text that explains what you are attaching.

“Instant messaging” is a form of online communication like e-mail. You can type messages to someone and they can see the messages almost immediately. Files attached to instant messages can also contain viruses. In most cases, viruses spread when you open an infected file attached to an instant message appearing to come from someone you know.

Finally, two things: share your knowledge with others so that they will be more vigilant on the ‘net, and report abuses, including spam, via the Federal Trade Commission <http://www.ftc.gov>, your Internet Service Provider and your bank or credit union. Most have addresses to use that may begin with phishing, abuse or spoof. Check their Web pages for the correct one.

Remember to be careful out there on the ‘net!

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

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## Fun with Freeware

Written by Cary Quinn, a member of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado <http://ppcompas.apcug.org/>

Here are a couple of utilities I have been using lately to correct bumps in the road to a positive *Windows* experience.

### **OverDisk (v0.11 beta)** (freeware)

<http://users.forthnet.gr/pat/efotinis/programs/overdisk.html>

Elias Fotinis, a programmer from Greece, is one of those programmers you often find on the Net who in their spare time write little apps and utilities to solve some personal issue they might have in getting the operating system, or some other program, to work the way they want it to.

One of the programs he has written is a disk space monitor called *Overdisk*. It basically scans a drive or folders of your choice and tells you how much space is being taken up by the files therein. One special difference with *Overdisk* though, is the way it graphs that data to your screen.

Instead of representing the files as a pie chart, or bar graph, *Overdisk* shows a breakdown of folders and files as a series of concentric rings, as if you were looking down onto the disk itself and seeing the files laid out below. But it's even better than that.

When you mouse-over a particular section of the chart, a tool tip window will appear to give you more information

about that particular folder (size, number of subdirectories, and number of files); and if you click on a specific point of the chart you can drill down to get the same information for individual files. Clicking on the center of the chart takes you back up the directory path, or you can click on the tree view on the side of the screen to better select a particular folder to view.

I find this utility most useful when trying to identify what parts of a drive need to have a cleanup, or which folders I need to prioritize for backups.

### **Taskbar Shuffle** (free, but accepting donations)

<http://www.freewebs.com/nerdcave/taskbarshuffle.htm>

From the home of the nerd cave, comes a pretty nifty little tool that answers a minor nit I have had with the Windows Taskbar for a while—why you cannot drag and drop the programs listed on the taskbar to better arrange your programs to your preference. With Taskbar Shuffle, you can. That seems pretty simple, and it appears to work quite seamlessly within the OS.

The utility leaves an icon running on your system tray that you can use to turn it on or off, or close it down completely. I've been using it for a few months, and haven't noticed conflicts with other windows or programs that would cause me to want to shut it off.

[cary.quinn@gmail.com](mailto:cary.quinn@gmail.com)

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# Vista Vexes

The *Windows Vista* Pains'n'Gains Page

Written by Jan Fagerholm, Assistant Editor, PC Community [jan-f\(at\)pacbell.net](mailto:jan-f(at)pacbell.net)

OK, so I've suffered through the betas and RC1 and RC2 (Release Candidate = not quite done yet), and now through two succeeding RTMs (Release To Manufacturing = the finished product) So what's the final version of Windows Vista finally like? Is it worth the pain of upgrade?

I'm not going to spend much time telling you how pretty the Aero interface is, or how cool the Flip3D task switcher is – the computer press has already given lots of space to these features. I intend to relate some experiences with hardware and software that I have encountered. I'll mainly focus on the stumbling blocks, as these are the reasons that you may want to wait until the problems that relate to you are resolved. If you went through the *XP* changeover five years ago, you are in for a similar experience with *Vista*.

I've previously written bits about *Vista* and done *Vista* presentations for PCC, and now hope to provide you with some insights gained from experience with the final version. What I can offer here is some real-world experience with hardware and software support, as well as a perspective gained from a programmer's view of the workings of *Vista* and how it affects you through the interface, as *well* as a comparison to other OSs that I regularly use, *Linux* and *Macintosh OSX*.

I am an unabashed Linux geek, so what am I doing messing with *Vista*? I tell myself that I need to know *Vista* because my *Windows* clients are going to ask me about it, and I need to give them a better answer than Microsoft's marketing department will give them. I participated in the beta program and even rejoined MSDN (Microsoft Developers Network) for the carrots they offered, one of which was a downloadable .ISO image of the final RTM version when it was released to MSDN on Nov. 17th. There is some real-world pain involved with upgrading to *Vista*, and I'd like to relate some of these experiences, for you shall certainly share my pain if you decide to go with *Vista* the minute it hits the street.

First, a bit of background on *Vista*: five years in the making, yet still rushed to finish on time. The Upgrade Install bug in the Nov. 8th RTM release, which destroyed existing *XP* installations, was fixed and the RTM was re-released on MSDN on Nov. 17th. This RTM version is the one that is going to computer manufacturers so they can preinstall it on the computers they sell.

After all this introduction, let's get on to some hard information. Bear in mind that I am talking about the final version of *Vista*, not the beta or RC versions.

Though I mentioned this previously, it's worth mentioning again because it will affect everybody. *Vista* has a new security feature called "User Account Control" that is intended to protect the system from "unauthorized

changes" that can affect the system or other user's settings, particularly from malware and spyware. It does this by popping a dialog in your face every time something tries to write to certain system or user folders. It also does this whenever you attempt to do a normal software installation even if you are logged in on an administrator account. It came up during installation of Microsoft, Adobe and Corel software. In the case of Adobe and Corel software, it also made the installation fail, even though I told it to allow the changes during installation. Installation of this software did not succeed until I turned off User Account Control. To turn off User Account Control, go to Start -> Control Panel -> User Accounts -> and click the link for "Turn User Account Control on or off". Once you have turned it off, Security Center will complain that it is off, and penalize you by reminding you it is off every time you log on to the system, but this is a small price to pay for normalizing the system.

Among the hardware that you can expect to lose with *Vista* is the ubiquitous Creative Sound Blaster Live! 5.1 series of sound cards. *Vista* has a two-channel audio driver for the card, but you lose 5.1 surround sound and the game port. Thus, I not only lose 6-channel capability of my \$100 5.1 Surround speaker system, I also lose the use of my \$120 Microsoft Force *Feedback Pro* joystick. Creative's Web site says they do not plan *Vista* support for the Live! 5.1 series of sound cards – I must upgrade to at least a \$150 X-Fi card to get back both of these capabilities. I am *not* pleased, as I have Live! 5.1 cards in two of my computers.

Judging from manufacturers' Web sites, many scanners are going to be abandoned under *Vista* as well. This is similar to what happened when *XP* came out. (i.e. The manufacturer chose not to write an *XP* driver for the scanner.) My HP ScanJet 6300C doesn't work in *Vista*, and HP's Web site is depressingly silent about scanner support in *Vista*. Of the twenty or so different scanners of different make that I have plugged into *Vista*, none of them over two years old would work.

Printer support, on the other hand, is quite good. Judging from the printer database, it looks like almost everything that works under *XP* will also work in *Vista*. The *Vista* drivers are as rudimentary as *XP*'s though -- you will need to get the manufacturers' drivers for high-resolution printing in many cases.

Early returns are in on *Vista*. Many of the developer forums that I belong to are abuzz with *Vista* experiences, from installation to device support.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# NeatReceipts Scanalyzer

Written by Mike Wayte, a member of the Boeing Employees Computer Society, Washington <http://www.becs-wa.org>

[mikejwsr\(at\)comcast.net](mailto:mikejwsr(at)comcast.net)

The *Scanalyzer* by NeatReceipts is a hardware/software package that allows you to organize the paper products in your life. It is specifically geared to copying, analyzing, organizing and filing receipts (with provisions to identify and present Income Tax information) and business cards, and copying, sorting and storing documents.

One might say, I store my receipts and tax information in a file cabinet, my business cards in a cardholder and my documents in notebooks—why do I need a Scanalyzer?

Those thoughts were on my mind as I read the information on their Web site. But the more I read, the more intrigued I became with the description of their product. After a few calls, one showed up on my doorstep.

Let's start with first impressions: the scanner is small. I thought, yes, it is small, but I already have a scanner, why do I need this one? It is very portable. If you travel, you can plug this into your laptop via the USB cable and you are ready to copy and organize your expense receipts, catalogue those business cards you picked up and save that literature you collected. Now everything is orderly, in one place. If you are at home, you will find the *Scanalyzer* quickly scans your material, rotates the receipt on the screen and puts the information in the proper storage slot, all more quickly than an all-purpose office machine would do. For those of you who do not have photocopier capability, enter *Scanalyzer*. Run the document through the scanner and print out a copy.

We have all been exposed to sales pitches. I wanted to see if this thing could really do all the purported analysis of receipts and business cards.

The interface is very user friendly. The types of items we wish to file are an easy click away. When a feature comes up we see all the information categories into which data will be catalogued. There are about 20 choices, and if you don't like those you can change the name of one you don't like to something you want.

I started with receipts: I collected as many different receipts as I could. One of the features is that the *Scanalyzer* has a database with 1,500 stores/ vendors. Thus, many of your receipts will match the database and be so identified. For those that don't, you type in the name the first time (I was surprised to learn that Costco was not in their database) and it will be remembered. My receipts covered a wide range of sizes, shapes and suppliers. Everything from gas station receipts from Costco to Hertz Equipment rental statements. There were a few glitches, such as missing names, reading Costco zeros that look like phi ( ) as 8 or adding digits to the receipt.

Overall, however, receipts entered top up, top down, sideways (width limit of 8-1/2 inches) or anywhere be-

tween gave the same result. The accuracy was truly impressive. It also has the capability to allow you to split expenses from a single receipt, which can be multi-page. At present they do not have an archiving system but are working on it. Categories and vendors are determined by the user to catalogue and save receipt information. Sales tax is captured and isolated as a category. You can also identify a tax-deductible item. Tax-deductible items are gathered up and summarized for entry into your 1040. The IRS accepts the electronic receipt format.

Being a packrat, I have many different kinds of business cards. A couple of my old Boeing cards resulted in a flawless copy and catalogue job. Other cards ranged from a complete job to an almost incomplete job. I showed 15 different cards at the meeting. Those with graphics (e.g. car repair shops with figures of cars) did not fare as well as a "strictly business" type of card. The information that can be copied and catalogued includes name, company name, phone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses and Web sites. Clicking on the Web site in the database takes you directly to the site. You can recall the card information by one of several methods, including the person's first or last name, the company name, address or, like an Internet search, information containing some data.

Finally, there is the document copy feature. Tell the *Scanalyzer* how many pages and how you want to file it, and copy away.

Did I also mention they have a great Help Desk using a version of instant messaging (or telephone if you really need help)? Top notch!

OK, how much does the *Scanalyzer* cost? The list price is \$229. On the Web I've seen it for as low as \$180. NeatReceipts has offered us the product for \$170 at your front door. UPS ground shipping will be used to send the product to you.

The procedure for ordering it is:

Call Guilia Umile (pronounced Julia Umilay) of NeatReceipts at 1-866-632-8732, ext 106; If she is not at her phone, leave your name and phone number; she will call you back. They take the major credit cards: Visa, MC, Amex and Discover. <http://www.neatreceipts.com/> Cost is \$170, which includes shipping.

**[Note from Judy Taylour, Chair, APCUG Benefits / Services Committee: Guilia has extended the offer to all of the APCUG-member user groups.]**

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# Buying an HDTV?

By Bob Elgines, Editor, Colorado River Computer Club, Arizona

<http://www.crccaz.com/>

There are three things necessary for true High Definition (HD) Television (TV): an HDTV, HD receiver (or tuner) and HD programming. All TV stations will be capable of HD by 2007.

New HDTVs are here and will be required starting in 2009; but, of course, there will be converters available. The standard for Antilog TV was 525 lines per frame vertically. The old mandates of FCC requirements were first 2004, and then 2007. There are many HDTV models out there, and some of the description of their characteristics are confusing. Hopefully I can clear up a few items of concern.

**First** let us consider the three **types** of TV screens or TV monitors:

1. **LCD** – Cheaper in price.

They can be wall mounted;

37" weighs about 50 to 60 pounds;

Sizes up to 52"; 4" to 5" thick;

160-degree view angle (with decreasing contrast);

Last 10 to 20 years;

The thinnest, lightest sets and have minimum reflection of lights in the room.

2. **PLASMA** – Moderate in price.

They can be wall mounted;

42" weighs about 85 to 90 pounds;

Sizes 42" and up; 4" to 5" thick;

170-degree view angle (contrast good thru-out);

Lasts 10 to 20 years;

Better color accuracy and displaying the deepest black, but screen's shiny surface can produce reflections of lights in the room, and static images can "burn-in" and produce a ghost image.

3. **DLP** – (digital light processing).

Moderate in price for size;

Not wall mounted;

42" weighs about 45 to 60 pounds;

Sizes 42" and up;

8" to 15" thick;

160-degree view angle (contrast good thru-out);

Lasts 8 to 10 years (bulb or lamp);

A "rainbow effect" that some viewers may notice on the edges of bright objects on the screen.

DLP is used in most new projectors.

**Second**, let's discuss **Resolution** (pixels are the number of dots per line), the higher the resolution the better the picture, or higher quality. The old Standard Digital TV format is 720 (Horizontal) x 480 (Vertical).

The new HDTV formats are 720 and 1080, but most HDTVs also allow using the 480 standard. There are not many things out there for the 1080 "i or p" format. Where "p"= Progressive – draws lines on screen from top to bottom, and is considered the best for high-speed movement without blur. Whereas "i"= Interlace – draws odd lines from top to bottom then even lines from top to bottom.

1024 x 768 pixels, 1366 x 768 pixels, and 1780 x 720 pixels all fall under the 720p format, and many 720p-HDTVs accept the 1080i format.

1920 x 1080s fall under either the 1080i or 1080p format and most accept the 720p format.

Screen size is measured diagonally. Therefore, if you now have a 32" TV, you will most likely want a 37" to 42" for your replacement. That way you will have basically the same height, but of course it will be wider.

**Third**, let's discuss other concerns such as inputs and outputs (most sets come with stereo sound speaker systems):

1. **HDMI** – latest version is 1.3. This is a connector that requires a special cable and is not usually included with your TV. This could be used for 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound systems, video games such as X-Box, HD-Cable boxes, HD-DVD players, etc.

2. **Component** – One to three inputs are provided, used to connect DVD players, games, etc.

3. **Cable Slot** – latest version is 2.0, used for Cable Simm Cards. Most cable companies are not interested, but new FCC mandates starting in 2007 may change this. Also some companies are considering including the Cable Card internally.

4. **Tuners** - Usually two tuners are included, one NTSC (we are now using Analog and Digital TV, also called Standard TV) and one ATSC (this is the new HD digital TV tuner, required for HDTV). Stay away from a TV listed as "HD-ready;" it does not have an ATSC tuner.

**Summary.** It boils down to what you think looks and operates the best for your situation. Ask questions and check out the specification of the unit you wish to buy. If you are upgrading your cable or satellite service to HDTV, be sure to ask for "hi-def," not digital. Good luck!

*Elginesz(at)rraz.net*

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

# The *Windows XP* Services Manager

Written by Dick Maybach, a member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey

<http://www.bcug.com/> N2nd@att.net

*Windows*, like any multitasking operating system, is complex, with dozens of processes running, even when your PC appears to be idle. Some of these are independent, but many rely on other processes. In simpler times, our computers did only one thing at a time; but few of us want to return to the days when, for example, everything stopped during printing. Fortunately, *XP* provides some tools to help you understand what is going on behind your back, and one of the more helpful of these is its Services Manager. First, a caveat – this will help you figure out only what the benign processes are doing; it is not effective in identifying viruses and spyware, which often hide from you.

To start the manager, right-click on My Computer and then left-click on Manage. When the Computer Management Window opens, click on Services and Applications, double-click on Services, and click on the Extended tab at the bottom of the window. (You will want to enlarge the window to see all the information.) You can now see a list of all the services available on your machine. My laptop has about 100 services, about 60 of which are running as I write this article. If you single-click on a service, you can see its status and description. For example, on my laptop the ClipBook service has the following description, “Enables ClipBook Viewer to store information and share it with remote computers. If the service is stopped, ClipBook Viewer will not be able to share information with remote computers. If this service is disabled, any services that explicitly depend on it will fail to start.” The Manager also shows that this service is disabled on my laptop. You can learn more by double-clicking on the item. Again for ClipBook, the executable file is C:\Windows\system32\clipsrv.exe. Clicking on the Dependencies tab shows that this service depends on the Network DDE and Network DDE DSDM services and that no other service depends on it. You can learn more about these dependent services by clicking on their names in the window.

The companies that provide the software supply the descriptions. Microsoft’s descriptions are helpful, but others can be less so. For example, Symantec SPBBCSvc is described as, “Symantec SPBBC.” In such cases, you can try a Web search for the name,

although I ran out of patience before I found out what SPBBC does.

As is common for *Windows* programs, you can sort the services list by clicking on a column heading. For example, clicking on Status, lists the started services last; clicking on it a second time shows them first.

If you suspect that a service is causing problems, you can turn it off by double-clicking on its name and then clicking on the Stop button. This stops the service only for the current session; it will start again when you restart *Windows*. Thus, this is a safe way to troubleshoot process problems. You permanently stop a process by double-clicking on its name and changing the Startup type from Automatic to Manual or Disabled. A disabled service never runs; and a manual one can be started by clicking the Start button. If you do this, keep a record so you can reverse anything that causes problem.

While you have the Computer Management window open, look at its left pane. In particular, click on Disk Management (under Storage) to see a text and a graphical description of all the hard and removable disks on your system. This shows the partition sizes and types, what file system they contain, how full they are, and their health. If you right-click on a partition in the graphical display, you can explore it, change its drive letter, or (be careful) format or delete it.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

## **NVPCUG Archives, Utilities on CD Now Available**

**Ron Dack** has responded to the request of user group members for more of the CDs he has prepared in the past. In addition to archives of the newsletter, he has included handy-dandy free utilities like the latest editions of *Firefox*, *Ad-Aware*, *Adobe Reader*, and *Hijack-This*. Instead of waiting for these programs to be downloaded from the Web, you can have them for immediate access on a CD.

Ron is doing this as a fund-raiser for the group. If you wish to reserve a copy, e-mail him before the meeting at [President@nvpcug.org](mailto:President@nvpcug.org)

# Laptop Desk --

## Simple Accessory Provides Comfort and Ease of Use

Written by Gabe Goldberg, Columnist for CompuKISS.com; APCUG Advisor; Program Coordinator & APCUG Rep,  
Capital PC User Group, Inc. <http://www.compukiss.com> [gabe\(at\)gabegold.com](mailto:gabe(at)gabegold.com)

It's the rare simple device that hitches a ride on multiple trends simultaneously. How simple? Three moving parts. Which trends? First, folks downsizing living quarters as their nests empty; second, increased use of laptop PCs as primary, only, or secondary computers; and third, laptop computers operating hotter as they become ever more powerful. The device? The Laptop Desk from LapWorks.

It's an elegantly simple laptop stand. My wife calls it, "a seemingly insignificant piece of plastic, which I love". Before she had it, she was constantly trying to find things to put under her computer to prop it up. She tried books of varying sizes, pieces of wood, parts from other office equipment, TV remotes, whatever came into view. None of them worked and the laptop's utter flatness drove her crazy.

Now, she takes it everywhere with her laptop. "It's great!" she says. She props it up at varying angles, depending where she's working...on her lap, a table, a desk, wherever she moves, and she moves around a lot. Folding flat and sliding into the laptop case, it's not in the way when she's on the move. It allows customizing the keyboard angle for easy typing. And because of the elevation, our cats no longer walk across or lie down on laptop keyboards.

The stand consists mostly of two sturdy hinged plastic pieces with raised rubber pieces that hold the laptop in place. A smaller third piece fits into slots providing five different elevation options.

The hinged pieces, rippled in design with raised rubber pieces, hold the laptop in place and allow air to circulate underneath it. So the computer's heat is well-vented, avoiding discomfort from resting the laptop on your lap or major damage to the computer.

Three models of The Laptop Desk are available: the UltraLite, for newer/lighter laptop computers; the Laptop Desk 2.0, for heavier PCs; and the Laptop Desk 1.0, a simpler version not providing elevation, intended for human-lap use only.

Costing less than \$30, the Laptop Desk is a handy addition to portable PC computing. And unlike most

computer accessories, it needs no assembly or installation, doesn't require reading instructions, and includes no software that will become obsolete.

Manufacturer: LapWorks

<http://www.laptopdesk.net>

Retail: About \$30

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## Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

### Membership Application/Renewal\*

New    Renewal    Information Update

#### Please Print

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Street/PO Box: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (check preferred):  Home: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Work: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (check preferred):  Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Profession: \_\_\_\_\_ Retired? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want to be added to the following NVPCUG e-mail lists?

News and announcements:  Yes  No

General discussion of computer-related topics:  Yes  No

If you do **not** want your preferred phone number and/or e-mail address published in the *NVPCUG Directory*, which is for the exclusive use of NVPCUG members, check the appropriate box(es):

Do not list phone number    Do not list e-mail address

Family members whom you want to sponsor as Associate Members:  
(Associate Members have the same membership rights as their sponsors, except for receiving newsletters)

Full Name

E-mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues (check appropriate boxes):

\$30 **Regular Member** - an individual who is not a full-time student

\$20 **Student Member** - a full-time student who is not eligible for Associate membership.

\$10 **Associate Member** - a family member of a Regular or Student member. Associate memberships run concurrently with sponsors' memberships.

Make check payable to **Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group**.

Mail application/renewal to: **Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group, Attn.: Membership Director, P.O. Box 2866, Napa, CA 94558-0286.**

The NVPCUG is an accredited IRC 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your dues payment may be tax-deductible as a charitable contribution.

\* To request a Corporate Membership Application/Renewal form, e-mail: [Membership@nvpcug.org](mailto:Membership@nvpcug.org).

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For more information about the NVPCUG, visit our  
Web site: <http://www.nvpcug.org>

# Protecting Your Outlook Express E-mail

Written by Ron Farren, member of the Keowee Computer Club of Oconee County, South Carolina

<http://kkeyword.tripod.com/>

There are, as usual, several ways to protect yourself from a drive failure and loss of your e-mail. This tip is for users of OE only.

Your e-mail is all stored in a single folder and, if you can find that folder, you will find that it contains a large number of files. Most of these files will have the extension of ".dbx" if you are configured to show the extension. Microsoft uses a proprietary format, which makes these files quite difficult to view except with OE. In addition, the individual files are not useful without the index, which is stored in a separate file within this folder. If you want to back up your e-mail, it is possible to save the entire folder someplace. It is relatively easy to copy the entire folder to an external drive or to a second drive. Should you experience a problem that causes the loss of your e-mail, you can merely copy the folder back to its original location. Sounds simple enough.

First, you have to find the folder. That is done via Tools/Options/Maintenance. There you can click on "Store Folder" and it will have the address of the folder you are looking for. You may notice that it is really buried deep into the system. Now that you know where it is, you can copy that address for future reference and periodically save the folder as backup. If you are not satisfied with trying to remember the default location of the messages, it is simple enough to move the folder somewhere else. For example, you could place the folder directly on the C: drive, which would make it easier to find next time. That can be done by clicking "Change" and following the instructions. An even better solution is to place the e-mail folder on a separate partition, which prevents it from being destroyed if your C: drive should be corrupted by some foreign invader.

Changing the location of the e-mail folder will automatically move all your e-mail to the new location.

So now you know how to save and restore your e-mail. However, there is another step you may wish to take. Suppose you decide to back up you e-mail once a week or every seven days. Should you have to restore the



Ron Ferren

backup, you will only lose seven days' worth of e-mails. Would you like to know how to recapture them, also? The answer lies within the options available in OE. The following will work with most ISPs, although there may be some that do not allow this feature.

Open Tools/Accounts, select the account you are concerned with and select Properties/Advanced. Place a checkmark by "Leave a copy of messages on server." Now place a checkmark by "Remove the messages after" and set it to 8 or 9 days. Now place a checkmark by "Remove from server when deleted from Deleted Items." Now your e-mail server will retain messages for 8 or 9 days. You don't have to worry about OE retrieving the messages each time you connect to the Internet, since OE maintains an index of downloaded messages and will not download the same message a second time. However, if you have to restore from a backup, that index will not be up-to-date and the messages will be downloaded again. Telling the server to delete messages when you have deleted them should reduce the number of messages saved on the server - only the ones you intended to keep anyway.

One additional thought. If you decide to move the e-mail folder, why not move it into My Documents? If you have already made sure you keep all of your critical information in My Documents, wouldn't it make sense to put your e-mail there also? Now you can merely copy My Documents to that external drive once a week and you should be pretty well protected from major disasters.

It really pays to learn how to maintain and protect yourself. Once you have set up a procedure like this, it becomes something you can easily do once a week and feel more secure.

Computing should be FUN!

*Ronferren@mindspring.com*

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.*

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P.O. Box 2866

Napa, CA 94558-0286

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